

The Haves and the Have Not's

Luke Series #48

Luke 19:11-27

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Aren't you glad to be a Christian—to be a follower of such a great Savior? He continues to pour out His riches on us as we turn to His Holy Word—Luke 19, beginning at verse 11. Even when our Savior speaks hard words, challenging words, they are words that are full of grace because they come from the King of Kings. So let us worship Him now as we read this parable, beginning with Luke 19:11:

As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

This is the Word of God. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Years ago, I ran into a saying—I think it was in a Puritan saying that I copied down and haven't forgotten it since. This is what it says in its original wording: "Today, I am beginning to be asked, 'Wilt thou?' One day, I will be asked, 'Hast thou?'"

Today, God is asking, "Will you deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Me? Will you serve Me with all that you have and are?" One day, I will be asked, "Have you? Have you served Me with the life I've given you—with what I've entrusted to you?" This parable is calling us to live faithfully and labor faithfully for our Lord, in light of that Day when we'll be asked, "Will you? Have you?" Luke is an excellent teacher and he tells us very clearly within the parable what this parable is all about before he even tells it. It's in verse 11: "*As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.*"

His disciples are expecting the Kingdom to appear in all its fullness very soon, probably when Jesus enters into Jerusalem in just a few days. And you can understand why they would have that expectation. The whole Gospel of Luke has been building to this point. They know what the angel Gabriel said before Jesus' birth in Luke 1:32: "*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*"

They've heard of His baptism and how the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove, anointing Him to proclaim the Kingdom of God. And then how He withstood Satan in His temptation in the wilderness and demonstrated the power of His Kingdom by healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons—even telling them, "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom*" (Luke 12:32).

So from chapter nine to chapter 19, they've been on this journey to Jerusalem. They have been traveling along the way and Jesus takes the opportunity of this journey to instruct His disciples in discipleship. What will it mean to follow Him? What will it mean to live for the King? And as they're hearing this instruction, their anticipation is building that the Kingdom is going to arrive in its fullness, but they've been missing an important strand of Jesus's teaching: it's all about the cross.

You remember how Jesus continually tells them, "I must go to Jerusalem." What is the first thing He is going to do in Jerusalem? Suffer. He's also been telling them, "You are called to take up your cross and follow Me. There's going to be a lifetime of self-denial, service and suffering, so the Kingdom is not yet going to come in its fullness. First, there must be a cross before there is a crown. There must be a crown of thorns before there's a crown of glory."

So Jesus is correcting this notion that the Kingdom of God is going to appear immediately. He is telling them that there is going to be a period now—a rather lengthy, significant period—where “You, My disciples, are going to devote yourselves to a life of humble, earnest service to the King in My absence, while you wait for My return.”

The aim of Jesus is to call His disciples to labor faithfully in that period of His absence. So how does He accomplish this aim? We're going to look at three movements in this parable.

- First, we are going to see two dates.
- Then we are going to see that there are three types of people living between those two dates.
- Finally, we are going to see that there is only one way that will be rewarded in the end.

Movement One: Two Dates

We find the first movement in verses 12 and 13. There are two dates, and only two, that should be shaping our agenda today—that should be shaping our perspective on life, our priorities and the way we live. Two dates. It's not the date of your birth and the date of your death, as important as those two dates are. It is bigger than that.

We find these two dates alluded to in verse 12 of the parable. Look at that verse. “*He said therefore, ‘A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom...’*” That is the first date—when a nobleman receives for himself a kingdom. And that's what happened when Jesus died on the cross to vanquish Satan and his evil kingdom, rose from the dead triumphant, and, 40 days later, ascended to the right hand of the Father. He now reigns there, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named—not only in this age but also in the age to come—so that right now, we, God's people who know the King, can sing, “Rejoice! The Lord is King!” Not “will be King.” He is King!

He sits at God's right hand until all His foes submit and bow to His command and fall beneath His feet. This is the first date. In shorthand, we could call it “The Date of the Finished Work of Jesus Christ”—the date when He accomplished salvation for His people and received for Himself a Kingdom. And He is reigning now. So we look back on the first date. And then we look forward to the second date which is referred to here in verse 12 as well.

He “*went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then [what?] return.*” One day, this King of ours, Who's sitting at the right hand of the Father, is going to come again in majesty and glory. And we say, “Oh, Lord Jesus, come quickly!” Our lives right now are to be lived with these two dates constantly in view: the day when He finished salvation for us in Jerusalem and the day when He will return in glory.

Sinclair Ferguson pressed this truth into my heart in a sermon I heard him preach. He said, "When this calendar is in our minds, it has a dramatic impact on our lives. These two dates should dominate and formulate the Christian life: the date of Christ's finished work on the cross and the date of His return in glory."

When these two dates are dominating and formulating our Christian lives, the result is spelled out in verse 13: "*Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.'*" Jesus calls His servants to Himself. He says, "Here's what I want you to be doing in My absence as you wait for My return. I want you to do a work of faith in My name, for the sake of My Kingdom."

Let's just pause here and make sure we get our thinking correct. Jesus is not just talking about pastors, missionaries and (I really don't like this term but I know we have to use it sometimes) full-time Christian workers. Jesus is not just talking about these people. It is unfortunate that we think of ministry and service so narrowly. Probably only 1-2% of Christians are really called to do these things. He's talking about how all of our lives—whether He's put us in a machine shop, at home caring for children, as a student in school, or in a time of retirement—everything that we are, all that we have, whatever sphere He's put us in, we are to see Him as our Lord and Master. And we are to be serving Him in that particular sphere of life.

All of us have different gifts and talents, different spheres of service. I want you to notice that is not the point of this parable. It is easy to think of another parable—Matthew 25, the parable of the talents which is very similar—and to conflate the two, missing the unique point of this parable. Notice here that Luke is not focusing on the different talents that he has given his various servants. The focus here is on what we all have in common. Each servant is entrusted with the same thing: a mina, which, in monetary terms, amounts to 3-4 months wages. They have all been invested by the king with the same gift. They have all been entrusted with what someone has called "the same operating capital for our service to the king."

When you think about that, when Jesus entrusts Himself—when He entrusts the gift of His grace, when He calls us into His Kingdom—He gives to each and every one of us the same amount of Himself. Luther, Calvin, Wesley and Amy Carmichael—name your hero—they had just as much of Jesus as you and I have. Jesus gives to you and me the fullness of Himself, just as He gives to all of His servants. God gives each of us grace and we are all called to the same calling: "Take what I've invested in you and engage in business with it. Work with it. Invest with what I've invested in you for the building up of My Kingdom."

Don't say, "I'm so weak. I have so little. I can do nothing for my King." No, don't make that excuse. Look at what He has given you, take it and invest it. That's what you are to be doing during these two dates—Christ's finished work and Christ's return. When He returns, it will matter how you've served Him with what He's entrusted to you.

Movement Two: Three Types of People

Now, let's move to the second movement, and the lengthiest one, in verses 14-24. There are only three types of people living in between these two dates. Each one of us in this room fit into one of these types. This is the biography of every human life. Each of us are either a foe of Christ the King, a faithful servant or a false servant—one of the three.

Let's look at the foes in verse 14. "*But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'*" Now, Jesus was very much a man of His times. He was very involved in the world He lived in. He knew the history and customs. In His parables, He often took earthly experiences—things they were familiar with—and used them to teach heavenly, spiritual truths. In this case, I believe, He was doing that—calling on their history.

We have similar events in our historical consciousness such as Watergate or the assassination of John F. Kennedy. These things happened 40 or 50 years ago. Some of us were very young or not even born when those things took place but we can still refer to those events. Just about everyone who knows anything about American culture and history knows what we are talking about.

Likewise, in the year 4 BC, which was about 30-35 years before Jesus was telling this parable, King Herod the Great had died. In his will, he had designated his son, Archelaus, to be the king of his realm in Judea. But because Judea was under Roman rule, in order for one of these local kings to take over, they had to go to Caesar in Rome and be given the authority to rule in the local realm. So when Archelaus went to Caesar in 4 BC to get the authority to rule, some Jews sent a delegation close on his heels because they did not like him. They said, "We do not want this man to reign over us." Caesar listened to this delegation and wouldn't allow Archelaus to be called "king." He was just ethnarch, which would be a real insult if you're of the royal blood. There was a lot of political turmoil during the leadership of Archelaus and the people would have understood this story. This story would have been ringing a bell for them.

Jesus wants all His disciples to realize that "when I go into Jerusalem, don't expect that everyone is going to receive me as King. As you go into all the world and make disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19-20), don't expect that everyone is just going to fall down and

worship Me. There's going to be treachery. There's going to be revolt. There will be rebellion. There will be people who refuse to submit to My reign."

The truth is you might fall into that category of thinking "I don't want Jesus running my life. I don't want to listen to His commands. I don't want to submit to His authority." That's a foe of King Jesus.

Then in verses 15-19, we see the faithful servants. There are two of them and we are going to focus on what they have in common. Both of them are accountable to Jesus and called to give an account (we see that in verse 15), just as we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for our works to Him.

The first servant took the mina, invested it and came back to him (verse 16) and reported a 1000% return on the investment. That's very good. And he hears from Jesus the words that every faithful disciple of Jesus longs to hear his dear Savior say in the end. Verse 17 says, "*Well done, good servant!*"

Will it not be music to our ears to hear the commendation of our Savior for a life faithfully lived in His service? Isn't that worth doing what we sing about, when we sing, "Gladly will I leave all behind me to serve and to follow Him"?

Notice that the reward for faithful service, both with the one who got 1000% return and the one who got a 500% return, both of them are entrusted with greater opportunities to serve as a result of their faithful service. "*Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.*" And the other one gets five cities. That's more service for the king.

So they both have to give an accounting to their master for their work; they both obeyed the orders of their Lord, even though no reward had been promised to them in advance. They simply heeded His word. They believed that the king was coming back so they both were investing in His Kingdom, not in their own personal wealth and prosperity, trusting that He was going to come back and call them to account. They both also give all the credit for their successful investment not to themselves, but to what their Lord had entrusted to them.

Notice how they put it in verses 16 and 18. They said, "Lord, your mina has earned..." There is this multiplicative power in the gift of the Kingdom that has been entrusted to them. It has this inherent power that, as they took what the king has given them and invested, it grows. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). It bears fruit; it grows; it has inherent power.

Notice, also, that the master's blessing on these faithful servants is totally out of proportion to their service. It's the grace of the generous king. Take one mina, three months'

wages. The next thing you know, you're a mayor of ten cities. Wow! How did that happen? "Barcelona! Rome! You've got them because you've been faithful over a little. Now you're going to be a ruler over much."

You might think your sphere of service right now seems so small or obscure, but you're in the service of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He rewards faithful servants in His name. Hudson Taylor said, "A little thing is just a little thing, but faithfulness in a little thing is a great thing." Jesus rewards faithful servants.

Then in verses 20-26, we see the false, faithless servants. I want you to notice the volume of text in this parable that is devoted to the false, faithless foes and the judgment that comes on them. We cannot faithfully preach this text or understand this text without seeing the dominant note of warning. This is intended to warn people who are living before the return of the king. The words that are spoken by the returning king to the false, faithless servants are not nice, comforting nor easy words.

In verse 20, he comes to his master and says, "*Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief.*" He's done nothing with what's been entrusted to him. He's made no investment with what the master has given him. He's just hung onto it. His rationale is in verse 21. He sees his master as hard and unjust. "Do you want to reap where you did not sow? You're a severe man! I'm afraid of you."

This is ironic in light of the generosity that has just been shown to the first two servants. Ten cities! Five cities! This is the way the human heart thinks about the King. We tend to think harsh thoughts of Him. We tend to suspect that He is not good and is not full of love. We suspect that He does not have the people's best interest in mind. The answer this man gives to his master proves that he never knew his master at all. He's under a delusion about his true character.

But that is not his only motive. He also holds on to what has been given to him. He carefully saves it because he recognizes that his master exists. He knows that the mina belongs to him and believes he's going to have to somehow face that master someday, just like people today know there's a God but don't really want to get close to Him or have a relationship with Him or live in such a way that they are seeing His Kingdom grow in the world.

People hang on to a semblance of religion. They are thinking, "Sure, God exists, and it's important for religion to have its place in society, but I don't want to have anything to do with Him personally. Christian morals are good but I can't really get too serious about following Jesus. I don't want to take this to an extreme. I can at least be a conservative. I can

at least hold on to the morality of the Christian faith. I could go to church a couple times a year, have a Christian wedding and send my kids to some religious training. I'll wrap up my little religion in a handkerchief and hold on to it."

The king condemns this false servant's behavior in verse 22. He is not agreeing with the way the faithless servant has maligned his character but he will go along with it for a moment. He uses the faithful servant's own words to call his bluff. He says to him, "I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant!" Does that sound like approval? Does that sound like the kind of affirmation you would want to hear from our returning King?

"You wicked servant!" He uses his words to say to him, "If you really believe what you say you believe about me, that I'm a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow, why didn't you do something with my money? Why didn't you invest what I gave you?"

A German pastor named Helmut Thielicke, commenting on this man, said, "There are really only two ways to take a thing seriously. Either you renounce it or you risk everything for it. Either you fling away the pound or you use it and trade with it. There is no third choice."

In light of this reality, where do you see yourself in relationship to Jesus Christ: foe, faithful servant or faithless servant? For herein is all humanity contained in these categories.

Movement Three: One Way of Life that Will Be Rewarded When the King Returns

That brings us to the third movement which is rich with application and is really driving to the main point of this parable. There is only one way of life that will be rewarded when the King returns—only one way. It is not the way of faithless service, just hanging on to what you receive without doing anything to multiply the investment.

When you look at verses 24 and following, we read, "*And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.'*" Does that seem harsh? Does that seem unfair? Jesus was reading our minds as He is telling this parable, and so He puts our thoughts into words right in the parable in verse 25.

He knows we are going to think, "That doesn't sound right." So He asked people responding. They said to Him, "Lord, he has ten minas! You're going to give him more?" Jesus does not soften it up one bit in verse 26: "*I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'*"

What is Jesus saying there? Let me try to tease it out a bit. That faithless servant had his Lord's investment but his Lord never had his heart. You can have the Word of God. We all have the Word of God right now. We are all hearing the Word of God but the deeper question

is, “Is the Word of God having its way with you? Is it taking hold of you, transforming you, changing you from the inside out, as the gift of grace that Jesus has entrusted to you works its powerful way in your heart?”

Those who have the gospel and are held by the gospel will have infinitely more than we can ask or imagine when we see our Savior and King face to face. However, those who appear to have it but are not really held in the grip of it, even the little they seem to have now in the way of religion will be stripped from them as worthless at the return of the King.

We must not lighten Jesus' words here. In His eyes, it is wicked to be entrusted with the resources of the Kingdom and to do nothing with that investment—to hear the Word but to never hear, to taste of its power and goodness but to never engage in the service of its advancement. Jesus says, “That’s wicked.” The way of faithless service will not be rewarded nor will the way of the foe—the way of those who said in verse 14, “*We do not want this man to reign over us.*” That will not be rewarded.

We sing,

Jesus is Lord, a shout of joy, a cry of anguish
As He returns and every knee bows low
Then every eye and every heart will see His glory...

(Jesus is Lord by Bethan Dillon & Matt Hammitt)

It is that shout of anguish that we are hearing at the end of this parable in verse 27, as the King encounters and brings His foes and enemies before Him. If you look in your Bible, you may see that there is a cross-reference to 1 Samuel 15:33. As you fix your eyes on Luke 19:27, I want you to remember that turning point in Israel's history when another king named Saul disobeyed the Lord and did not destroy the enemies of God's people. He left alive King Agag of the Amalekites, which was a sin of great disobedience in the sight of the Lord, proving Saul to be a faithless king. Samuel, God's faithful prophet, stepped in to complete the job that the faithless king, Saul, had failed to do.

I will read 1 Samuel 15:33 and I want you to look in the text in Luke as I read these words from 1 Samuel: “*And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.*” From that point forward, Samuel never again saw Saul until the day of his death but he grieved over him. That chapter ends saying, “*And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.*”

He was not a faithful king. Jesus is and will forever prove to be a faithful King and He will reign without a rival. He will not fail in the end to destroy those enemies of His Kingdom who shook their fists in His face and said, “We will not have You reign over us.” He says in

verse 27, *“But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.”*

Not the way of the foe, not the way of the faithless, but only the way of faithful service will be rewarded by the returning King. I think there is a danger here. When we read a parable like this, we have a bunch of questions coming into our minds. The danger is that we try to impose those questions upon a parable of Jesus in which He did not intend to answer those questions. They're valid and vital questions, questions that may be addressed by other sections of Scripture, but when we try to get one part of Scripture to answer questions this part of Scripture wasn't designed to answer, we can easily miss the penetrating thrust of this passage.

So what's the point Jesus wants us to see in this passage? It's this: there is only one way of life that Jesus will reward when He returns as King and that is the way of faithful service to His Kingdom. The test of faithfulness is not what you say; it is what you do with what the King has entrusted to you. Do you take what Jesus has given you in His Word and His gospel and invest it for the glory of the King?

Do you see yourself as a servant of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

- When you enter your high school tomorrow morning and are taking an exam, do you remember, “I belong to a King and I am serving Him right now. I will not look at my friend's paper and cheat on this exam because my life is pledged in service to the King”?
- When you're watching a movie or deciding what you're going to watch, do you remember that “the King of Kings and Lord of Lords has called me into His service, therefore I must be careful to not allow my mind to be corrupted in ways that will distract me or dissuade me from the service of my King”?
- When you are in a corporate strategy session at work and dealing with millions of dollars, there are hundreds of temptations to go in this direction or that. Some may be dishonest; some may be manipulative. Do you remember, “I belong to the One Who owns the earth and all its fullness and these things are trivial in comparison to His Kingdom”?
- When you are engaging with clients, it is so easy to shade the truth. Do you remember, “I belong to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and I am to serve Him right now”?
- When you are preparing dinner for your children and it has been -5° for three days, everyone is getting rambunctious and tempers are rising. Do you remember “these children have been entrusted to me so that I can make disciples for the King. Maybe this meal tonight is even part of that process”?
- When you are tucking them in for bed, do you remember to tell them, “You belong to One Who died for you in Jerusalem, so that you can belong to His Kingdom forever. He is coming again and the most important thing you do right now is

properly answer the question, 'Will you serve Me?' There's coming a day when the only thing that will matter is how you can answer His question, 'Have you served me?'"

- When you are looking at your finances, thinking about how to invest them, you are faced with the plight of nations that have only a sliver of gospel light in comparison to our own. When you're confronted with the poor, the homeless, the prisoner and the unwed mother, do you remember, "I serve a King of grace and glory. He's entrusted resources to me that I can use to bring others to know the King"?
- When you wake up in the morning, do you say, as John Calvin did, "Unto you, oh Lord, I offer my heart promptly and sincerely"?
- As you are going through your day, do you find yourself praying, "Take my moments and my days. Let them flow in ceaseless praise. Here I am, all of me. Take my life. Let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee"?

This is the only way of life that will be rewarded in the end. It is not the way of flawless service but the way of faithful service. The only way to live faithfully for the King is to cultivate faith in the King. How do we do that? I am going to give you three sentences by way of application.

1. Prepare for the return of the King by meditating gratefully and joyfully on His finished work as your Savior. Look back on what Jesus accomplished for you in Jerusalem—to seek and to save you from your lost condition, right before He went away into the far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom. Know that He's coming again for you in glory. Let that gospel truth of His perfect work on your behalf fuel and motivate your daily service to Him.
2. Do not shrink back from the clear gospel teaching that we should strive by God's grace to live lives that are fully pleasing to Him (it can only be done by God's grace). Don't introduce a contradiction where the Bible doesn't put one—a contradiction between the sweet and solid assurance of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone, which He died on the cross to win for every believer and a truth for which I would be willing to die myself. Do not put a contradiction between that truth and the equally strong and powerful admonitions in the New Testament that implore those of us who have been justified by grace to strive by that same grace to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him in every respect. Don't pull those two apart. They work together for God's glory.
3. Finally, if we are really getting to know our Savior King for Who He really is, we will find the duty of serving Him to be our heart's delight because it's Him we get to serve. We have this prospect of seeing the King in His beauty. We love Him and view Him in an amiable light. We believe that He is a good King, a generous King, a friendly King and the lover of our souls. We long to know Him, long to love Him and long to serve Him.

The faithless servant didn't know his Master. Had he known Him, he would have been delighted to serve Him. He would have been like the best pilots in the Navy, the Blue Angels,

whose leaders point out every single mistake with precision. But whenever they're going through a performance review and their leader points out a mistake, no matter how slight, the pilot's standard reply is, "Just glad to be here, sir. Just glad to be here."

If we know Who Jesus is, we will treat His service in that manner. "Oh, just glad to be in Your service because You are such a great King!"

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